

SYN. NO. _____

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

January 4, 2005

Nearly two years after the onset of war in Iraq, significant combat operations continue against terrorist and insurgent elements attempting to drive out American and coalition forces, discourage reconstruction efforts and disrupt upcoming election plans.

Most of the public attention and news coverage has focused on daily guerrilla attacks and the resulting casualties among American military personnel and civilian contract employees. Drawing less notice, but increasing concern, has been the lasting psychological effects on American personnel who engaged in major ground combat and hazardous security duty.

A survey of more than 6,000 respondents from four U.S. Army and Marine combat infantry units published last year in the New England Journal of Medicine found that nearly one in six soldiers who experienced combat in Iraq reported major depression, generalized anxiety or post-traumatic stress syndrome. Yet fewer than half of those individuals sought mental health care, and those in need of treatment were twice as likely as other respondents to worry about possible stigma, jeopardy to their discharge status, or other barriers to seeking necessary medical care.

According to the Los Angeles Regional Office of the Veterans Administration, Southern California is home to 1.2 million veterans, some 42% of the statewide veteran

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population, and more than half of that population resides in Los Angeles County. These-

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veterans need and deserve our attention, our understanding and our care in addressing this growing problem.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the County Departments of Health Services, Mental Health Services and Military and Veterans Affairs to examine the mental health needs of our veteran population and the mental health services available to them, and report back to the Board of Supervisors in 45 days with findings and recommendations for improving access and availability to these essential services for the men and women of our armed forces.

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(122804JEB)Veteran Mental Health